

Student Retention at Community Colleges

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Session Agenda

- Retention as a goal of community colleges?
- Who is attending community colleges?
- What Works
 - Increasing student success in community colleges?
- Recommendations

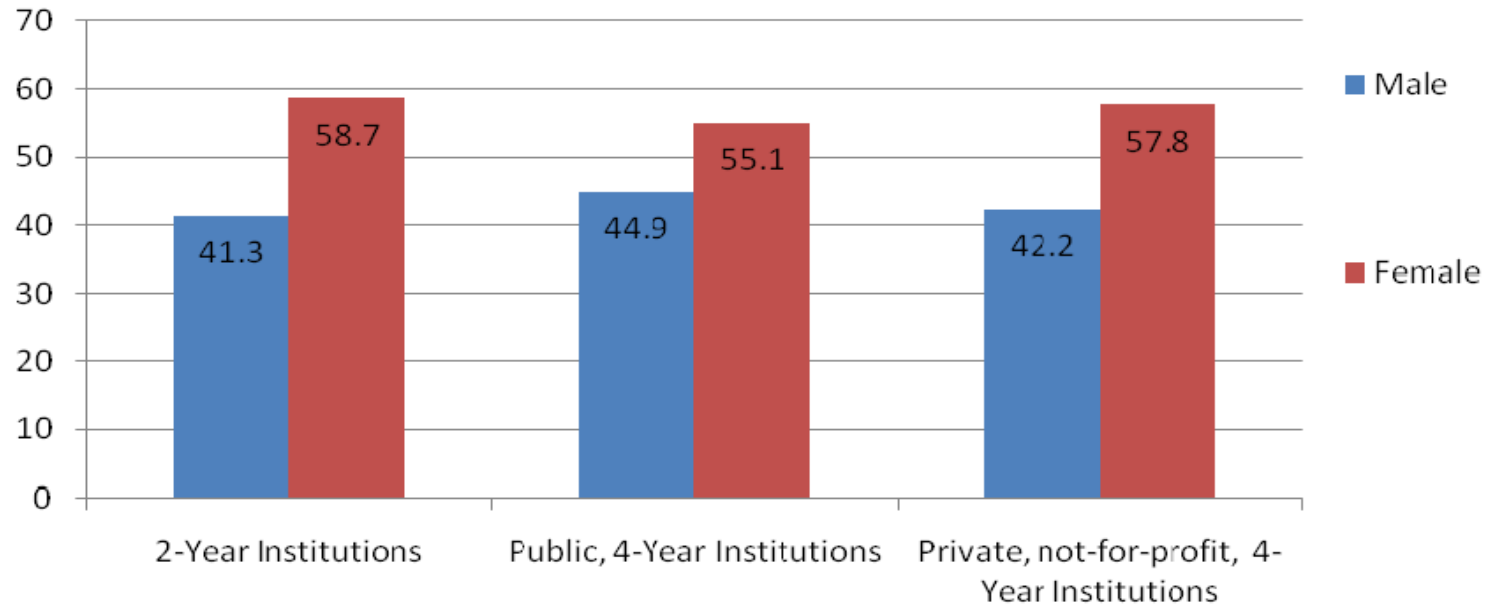
Is Retention the Right Measure?

- Define
 - Retention
 - Persistence
 - Goal Attainment
 - Success
- Necessary, but insufficient

Community College Students Nationally

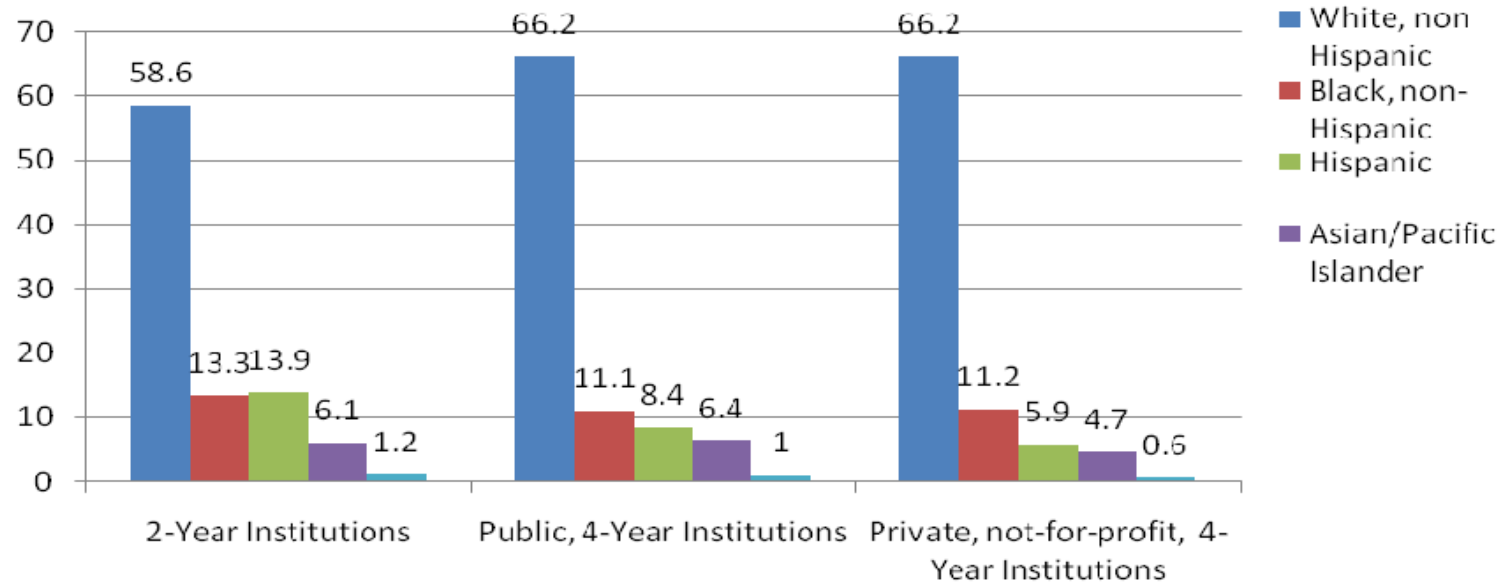
- Community Colleges award between 600,000 – 650,000 degrees/year
- Community colleges enrolled 6.2 million students (35% of all undergraduates) in 2006-07, including the majority of low- to moderate-income students.
- First generation students accounted for 47% of all beginning postsecondary students in 1995-1996 (Choy, 2001).
 - 53 % at 2-year
 - 34 % at 4-year
- 50-60% of students who enroll at CCs with intention of completing a degree, certificate, or transfer (to 4-yr), do so.

2004 Demographics by Institutions (by Gender)

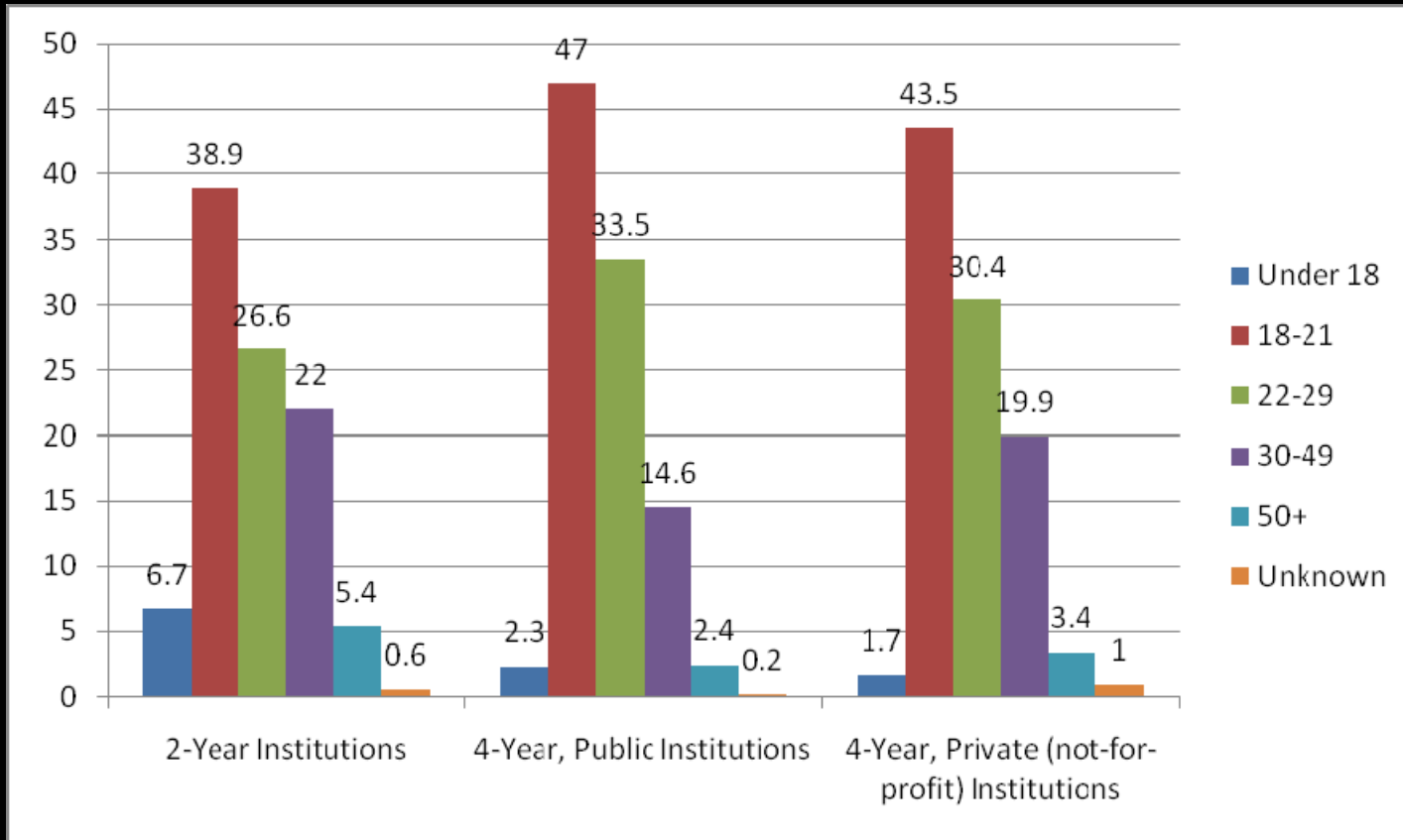


Percentage distribution of students in 2004, by gender (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2006)

2004 Demographics by Institutions
(by Race)



Percentage distribution of students in 2004, by race (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2006)



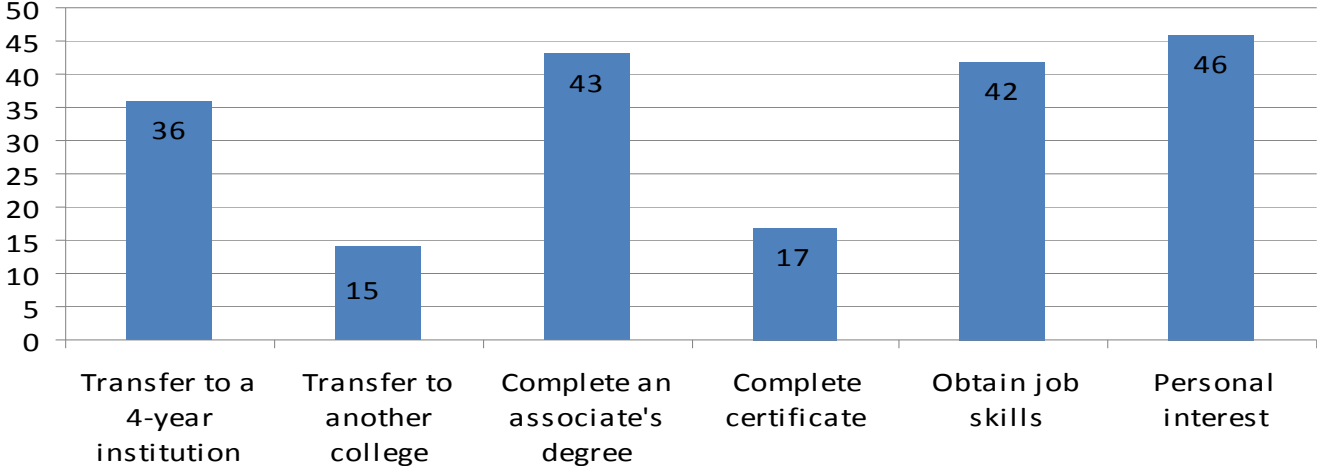
Total fall enrollment in degree-granting institutions by control, type, and age: 2007

Conclusions about students

- More likely to be a woman
- Less likely to be White
- Older
- First-Generation
- Lower SES

Reasons for Attending Community College (by percentage)

Academic Year 2003-2004

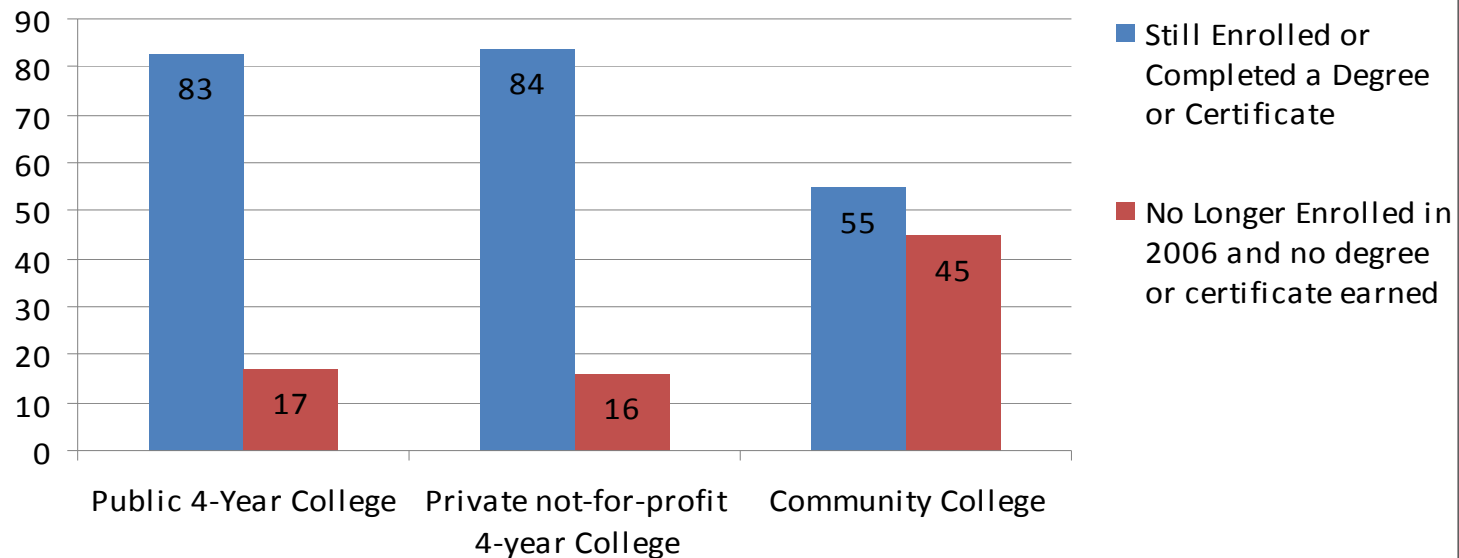


Percentage of Community College Students Reporting Reasons for Enrolling in a Community College: Academic Year 2003-2004 (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2008)

Conclusions from Research

- “Bimodal” distribution of students
 - Transfer students
 - “Traditional” Community College students
 - 39% students (who eventually enrolled in CC) had risk factors for dropping out of high school (NELS 1992 data)
 - 54% entered CC with one or more risk factors for college dropout

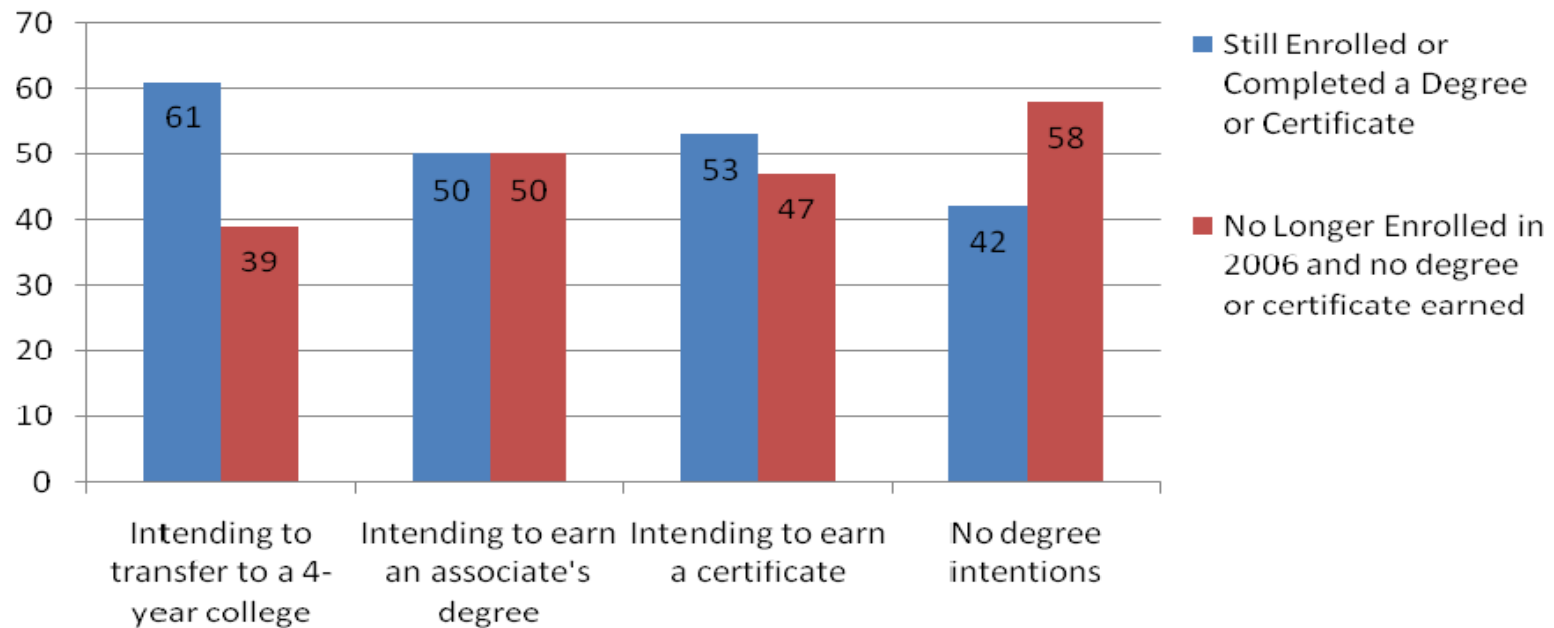
2003-04 First-Time College Students: 2006 Persistence
(by type of Postsecondary Institution)



Percentage distribution of first-time college students in 2003-04, by persistence in 2006 (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2008)

2003-04 First-Time Community College Students: 2006 Persistence

(by Program Plans)



Percentage distribution of first-time Community College students in 2003-04, by persistence in 2006 (Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2008)

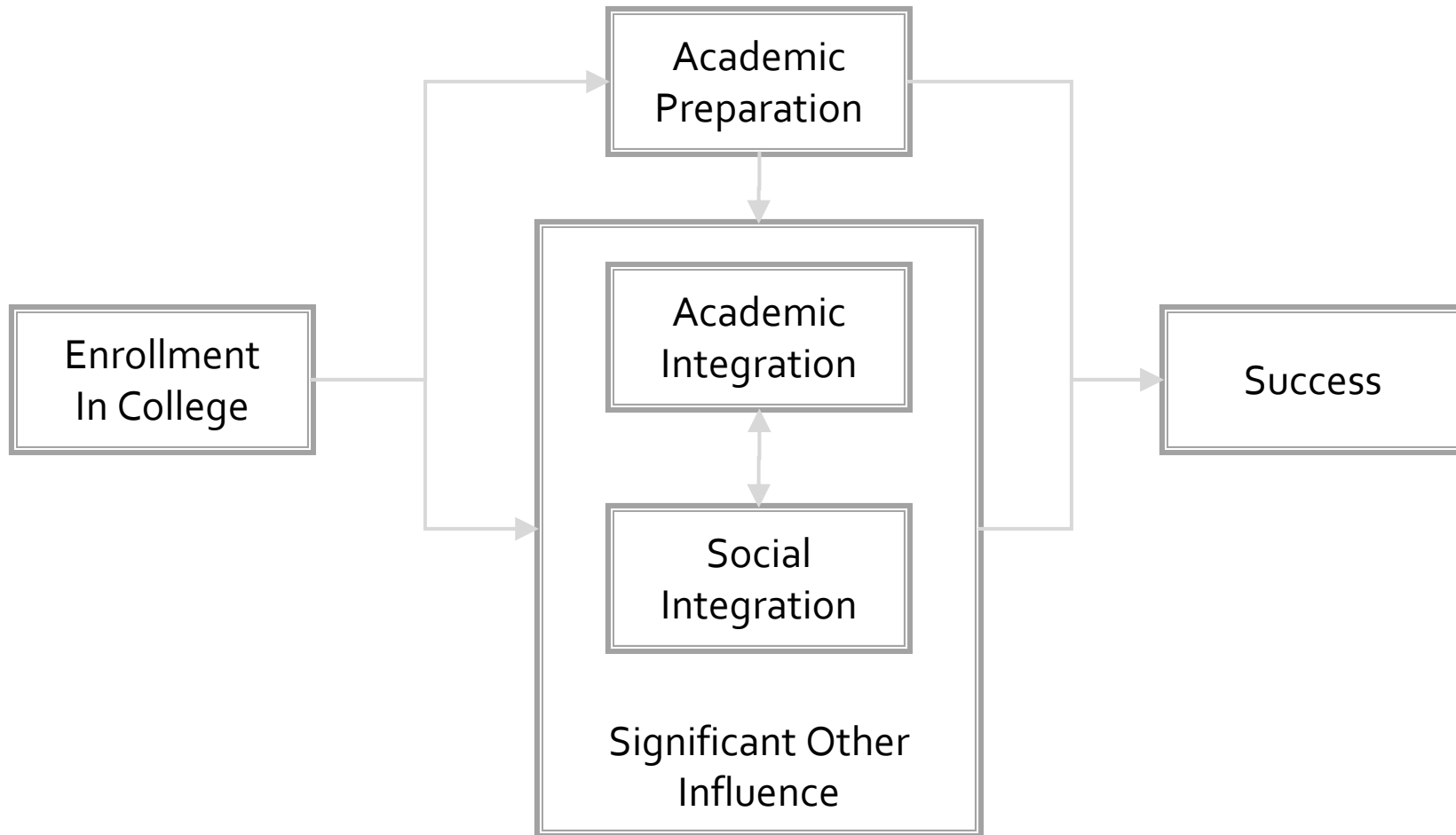
Need for Programs: Summary

- **Community college students**
 - Display multiple at-risk factors
 - Are less likely to graduate
 - Are more likely to be underprepared academically
 - Are less likely to know about or have information about college

Literature Review of Programs

- Three Major Themes
 - Academic Preparation
 - Academic Integration
 - Social Integration
- Significant Other Influence has a large effect on overall integration (Sewell, Haller, and Portes, 1969)

Conceptual Framework



Preparation for College

- Poor academic preparation is a significant factor in leaving college
- Parents typically have no experience with postsecondary education
 - Students therefore are less likely to receive college advice from parents
 - Students are less likely to know how to accomplish their educational goals
- Students have scant information
 - Those who seek information often receive it from questionable sources
 - Less likely to actively examine or know of alternatives
- Lack of information clouds planning and discourages students

(Person, Rosenbaum, and Deil-Amen, 2006; Pell Institute, 2004)

Theme 1: Academic Preparation

- Remediation
 - Students who need extensive remediation have lower retention and graduation rates , however, *no causal link* (McDaniel, 2001; Pell Institute, 2004)
 - Academic performance improved when identifying high risk courses and develop gateway courses (Hoyt, 1999)
- Impact of math remediation
 - Successful completion of math remediation is the strongest indicator for success when transferring to a four-year college (Bettinger and Long, 2005)
 - Taking one, two, or three or more college math courses increases low SES students' chances of degree completion by 3%, 34%, and 57% (Cabrera, Burkum, and LaNasa, 2001)
- Impact of Summer Bridge Programs
 - Almost unanimous in showing positive effects on college retention (Pell Institute, 2004)
 - Most studies do not compare students with comparable academic skills
- High retention institutions offer summer bridge programs or developmental courses (Pell Institute, 2004)

Theme 2: Academic Integration

- **Overall Academic Integration**

- High retention institutions put a great deal of effort into shaping students' educational experiences (e.g. intrusive academic advising, requiring multiple meetings) (Pell Institute, 2004)

- **Academic/Career Goals**

- Students with clear academic and career goals are more likely to persist than those who have not articulated their goals (Pell Institute, 2004)
- Academic goals has a positive relationship with retention when including traditional factors of SES and high school GPA (Robbins, et al, 2001)

- **Academic Motivation**

- Underprepared students are more likely to believe they have less control over their environment and are less likely to take action (Grimes, 1997)
- Academic self-efficacy and achievement motivation *after controlling for SES* are strong predictors of GPA (Robbins, et al, 2004)

Theme 2: Academic Integration

- Goals
- Progress
- Success

Theme 3: Social Integration

- **Overall Social Integration**

- Low-SES students report lower levels of enthusiasm for college (Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal, 2001)

- **Sense of Belonging/Integration**

- Compared to highest-SES quartile students, lowest-quartile students reported lower levels of involvement (Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal, 2001)
- Student who enroll in first-year programs show greater persistence and higher GPA (Sidle and McReynolds, 1999; Williford, Chapman, and Kahrig, 2000-2001; Pell Institute, 2004)
- High retention institutions with a high concentration of low-income students have special or professional affinity programs that enroll subgroups of students on the campus (Pell Institute, 2004)

Significant Other Influence (SOI) Theory

- Originally developed by Sewell, Haller and Portes (1969) who believed significant others influence a youth's educational and occupation aspirations.
- Significant Other is defined as an individual who:
 - Takes a keen interest in a student
 - Motivates the student to succeed academically
 - Possesses the knowledge and experience to be credible

SOI Theory

- First analysis on White Male college students found that these significant others did influence educational and occupational aspiration, as well as education attainment
- Further research specific to Black college students found schools needed to develop “machinery that can carry student’s along to higher levels of attainment”
- In another study on immigrant populations, application of SOI theory found
 - Need for compensatory programs of support for immigrant families and communities because of the lack of social and human capital.
 - Similar to other studies, SOI has direct effects on levels of educational and occupational aspiration and educational attainment

Implications of SOI Theory

- Colleges can offer SOI through mentor programs, developing faculty-student relationships, or having staff as key point person
- Students with SOI are more likely to have higher academic integration due to higher academic aspirations
- Students with SOI are more likely to be socially integrated having more means and aspirations to be involved in college
- Key staff within programs developed specifically for low-income students often served as SOI for these students

Attributes of Successful Programs

- **Academic Support:**
 - Intensive monitoring of program participants by an adult whose job was to do so
 - Academic support for popular/required courses
 - Supplemental Instruction and/or study group tutoring

- **Integration:**
 - Building group cohesion among peers and a sense of membership in the school and the program
 - Extensive student contact
 - Active student counseling (multiple meetings with students during a semester)
 - Sensitivity to the particular circumstances of the students and families being served (creation of 'safe spaces' for them to interact in school)

- **Significant Other Influence**
 - Focus on increasing student aspirations and realistic strategies for achievement
 - Development of role models in these programs (students and staff)
 - In addition to seeking out staff who had been first-generation college students, successful programs also considered whether staff's personal background characteristics would help them to serve as natural role models

(Gandara et al., 1998; Cahalan et al., 2004)

Recommendation 1

- Utilize the Significant Others Influence Model
 - Significant Others can motivate students to become more engaged
 - Although parents are most likely to be a student's SOI, low SES/First-Gen students are less likely to have a parent who can serve as an SOI.
 - Programs can help parents gain the right information about college

Recommendation 2

- Institutions must offer academic support programs
 - Supplemental instruction and/or group tutoring has been proven to have a positive effect
 - Academic support should not just be limited to course knowledge but also includes test-taking and study skills development, and academic advising

Recommendation 3

- Programs should also encompass issues beyond academics
 - **Career development** allows students to become more engaged with their academic curriculum and better understand their class choices
 - **Cultural activities** can help students integrate into the university environment better and feel more comfortable
 - **College orientation** and **family activities** can also help to create a better understanding of institutional expectations and integrate families into the process

Recommendation 4

- Summer programs can help bridge the gap
 - Alliances with local high schools will help the information process
 - And expose students to postsecondary opportunities at an earlier age
 - Summer programs can also help underprepared students to take preparation/developmental courses